

Designing frames: The use of precedents in parliamentary debate



Darren Umney, School of Engineering and Innovation, The Open University,
Milton Keynes MK7 6AA, UK

Peter Lloyd, School of Architecture and Design, University of Brighton,
Brighton, UK

Using the naturally-occurring data of official UK Parliamentary transcripts for the development of a new high speed rail project, this paper takes one characteristic of the design process, the use of precedent, to explore how problems and solutions are framed during discussion. In contrast to accounts of reframing that describe one big insight changing the design process we show how one particular precedent allows a series of attempts at reframing to take place in discussion. We conclude by arguing that precedents enable a diffusion of semi-objective meaning in discussion, similar to a prototype in a more conventional design process. This contrasts with other types of discourse elements, such as storytelling, that function through the subjective accumulation of meaning.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: design process, design precedents, framing, discourse analysis, legislation

The fields of design and design research have always had strong instrumental connections with government and policy. The then UK Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, in a foreword to a 1982 Conference on *Design Policy*, co-organised by the Design Research Society, focused on the benefit that good design could bring to consumers, writing: ‘throughout the world today, design ought to mean more than attractively finished products ... design should be the starting point where the customer’s needs are brought together with the realities of manufacture. [The designer] must know about manufacturing costs and about giving the customer value for money. Design research, education, and practice, are therefore of great significance to our economic and social wellbeing’ (Langdon, 1984). More recent work with government, though shifting away from a market led view of consumer products, has maintained the focus on improving economic and social wellbeing at the level of policy through the use of design (Miller & Rudnick, 2011), design thinking, and design methods to work collaboratively with policymakers in ‘labs’ (Bailey & Lloyd, 2016; Bason, 2014; Kimbell, 2015) and ‘nudge units’ (Leggett, 2014; Sunstein, 2014) worldwide.

Corresponding author:
Darren Umney
darrenumney@gmail.com



www.elsevier.com/locate/destud
0142-694X *Design Studies* 54 (2018) 201–218
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.destud.2017.10.008>
© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

In contrast to the *use* of designing in and by government, seeing the work of government as a kind of designing has also received attention in the literature, notably through the work of Schön and Rein (Rein & Schön, 1996; Schön, 1980; Schön & Rein, 1994) but also more recently (Dorst, 2015; Howlett, 2014; Umney, Lloyd, & Potter, 2014; Voß, Smith, & Grin, 2009). Here the concept of framing has been key in showing and exploring the dynamic relationship between complex socio-technical problems – for example in social policy, healthcare, energy, education, and transport – and the kind of solutions that are proposed (Hilton, 2016). Schön’s work, in particular, has usefully developed a number of terms for talking about general aspects of the design process that can be readily applied to the development of legislation and political debate. Terms such as ‘repertoire’ (Schön, 1988), ‘framing’ (Schön, 1984), ‘seeing-as’ (Schön & Wiggins, 1992), ‘naming’ (Schön, 1983), and ‘precedent’ (Schön, 1988) have all helped describe how knowledge, experience and expertise are enacted during *any* process of design.

In this paper we focus on the specific mechanism of introducing precedent (Alipour, Faizi, Moradi, & Akrami, 2017; Dobioli & Umbarkar, 2014) to show how framing takes place in debates about large-scale infrastructure. This makes the case for debates being considered as design activity, for which framing is viewed as integral (Paton & Dorst, 2011). The introduction of a precedent allows existing examples to be interrogated, as more conventional prototypes would be, in the terms of a new project (McDonnell & Lloyd, 2014). As with other types of wicked problems, and distinct from more conventional design processes, physical prototyping has limited usefulness and relevance during major infrastructure projects. While there is scope for engineers and planners to develop software models that predict behaviours and visualise the way solutions look when completed, these models are idealised and, of course, contested and often controversial. Precedents, then, provide a temporal analogy; a source is drawn from the past, with particular attributes that are intended to have some effect on the way we see the future (Lawson, 2004). The introduction of a precedent to a design process can therefore perform an important role in the development of a project, providing potential insights into the direction that stakeholders wish to see the future going and perhaps also their motivation for getting there.

1 The UK parliamentary context

The context in which we examine the use of precedents in political debate is the UK Parliament, where issues of national concern are discussed in the development of new legislation (Crewe, 2015; Rogers & Walters, 2015). The UK Parliament follows a series of prescribed stages in producing its ‘designed’ output in the form of legislative *Bills*. The process shown in Figure 1 is the UK Government’s representation of the parliamentary process, reproduced across a range of official publications. The stages of Figure 1 are formal

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6726699>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6726699>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)